

OBSERVATIONS

Upon a PAPER, intituled,

*"Some Considerations on the Importation
"and Exportation of Beaver; with
"Remarks on the Hatters Case."*

THE Author of the said Paper asserts, "That the *North American* Colonies, not being under the same Restraint "as the *Hudson's-Bay* Company, either manufacture "the Beaver there themselves, or otherwise dispose "thereof, as they find it most for their Interest, notwithstanding "any Law to the contrary:" From whence he concludes, "That "nothing but the Profit to arise from Beaver in *England*, will "induce them to bring it hither."

How much the said Colonies are obliged to the Author for this candid Insinuation, That they carry on a clandestine illicit Trade, to the Prejudice of their Mother-Country, is left to them to determine; and whether, if any such Trade is carried on by the said Colonies, some further Means of preventing it, than what are provided by the Act of the 8th *Geo.* the First, Cap. 15. may not be well worthy the Attention of Parliament, must likewise be submitted: But why so much greater a Profit should now be necessary to induce the Northern Colonies to send their Beaver to *England*, than was formerly necessary for that Purpose, as it is notorious they have constantly exported it, when at a much lower Price than what is now even desired by the Manufacturers here, the Author would do well to explain.

"That of the Beaver imported into *England*" (from *Hudson's-Bay*) "considerable Part has always been exported," will be admitted; but the Author has forgot to inform his Readers, that of the Beaver imported from *New York*, and the other Northern Colonies, very little (if any) was ever exported till within these Two Years; and that the Quantity so exported was bought up on Speculation, upon Account of the high Price it bore in the Market: From whence it may very fairly be concluded, that the Discouraging of the Exportation of Beaver can in no Degree affect the Importation from those Colonies, as they do not import it hither with a View to Exportation.

The Author has likewise forgot to mention another very material Circumstance in the present Question; namely, That, since the Northern Colonies have found out the Art of manufacturing their

their Beaver into Hats, not only the Quantity imported from thence has considerably decreased, but the Quality of the Beaver has been also much worse than formerly, those Colonies exporting only the refuse Part of their Beaver, which they can't make use of to so great Advantage in their own Manufacture: The Danger therefore of lessening the Importation of Beaver from the Northern Colonies, by reducing the Price, and the Loss to this Nation, in Consequence thereof, suggested by the Author, must, upon the slightest Consideration imaginable, appear to be merely chimerical. How far, indeed, the Reduction of the Price of Beaver may affect the private Interest of the *Hudson's-Bay* Company, the Manufacturers here do not pretend to determine.

"That the Hatters did not take off the whole Quantity of Beaver imported, even when the Price was lowest," is undoubtedly true: But here another Fallacy occurs in the Author's Conclusion, "That, if Foreigners had taken off the Surplus, it must have stopped the Importation:" For how was it possible for the Hatters to take off the whole Quantity imported, had they been able to manufacture it, when a great Part was always bought up for Exportation, which it was out of their Power to prevent? And even in a Supposition, that they could not then consume the Whole, what Argument can be drawn from thence, to prove, they cannot consume the Whole now; when it is notorious, that the Quantity left in the Market, for the Use of the Manufacturers here, was, in several of the Years alluded to by the Author, greater than the whole Quantity now imported? On the contrary, if no larger Quantity of Beaver should be imported for the future, than what has been imported for some Years past, the Manufacturers will undertake to consume the Whole in the Making of Hats; and are ready to contract for the same, if the Price be reduced as low, as it was, upon a Medium, during Twenty Years preceding the Year 1751; and, consequently, no Surplus will then remain for Exportation. The Policy therefore of endeavouring to reduce the Price of Beaver, by discouraging the Exportation, is as apparent, as the Policy of prohibiting the Exportation of Wool; the former being a Material as necessary for the Manufacture of Hats for Exportation, as the latter for the Manufacture of Cloth.

As to the Assertion of the Author, founded upon the Custom-house Account of the Exports of Hats, "That the Foreign Trade has of late Years increased," it may be observed, That, were the Authenticity of that Account admitted (as it is not), the Fact is very far from being as the Author suggests: For altho', since the Conclusion of the late Peace, the Manufacturers have made several Efforts to recover their Trade with *Spain*, lost during the War,
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and for that Purpose sent considerable Quantities of Hats thither ; yet, unfortunately, great Numbers of those Hats were returned, and many of them still remain there unsold : So that the Number of Hats specified in the said Account to have been exported (were the same true) is far from being a Proof of an Increase in the Foreign Trade : But when it is considered, that, in the said Account, Beaver and Castor Hats are blended together without Distinction, and that Persons shipping Hats for Exportation, commonly enter a much larger Quantity, than what is really shipped (as no Duty is paid on the Export of Hats) very little regard ought to be paid to that Account.

On the contrary, that the Foreign Trade for Beaver Hats has of late Years declined, is apparent, not only from the Evidence now before the House, but from the small Quantity of Beaver left in the Market, for several Years past, for the Use of the Manufacturers : So that, had the *Number* of Hats exported been equal to what it was formerly (which is very far from being the Case) yet the *Value* of them must be much less.

In Answer to the Author's Remark, " That great Numbers of " Non-freemen are now employed in the Manufacture of Hats," it is sufficient to observe, That the Master-Hatters of *London* do not only at this time, but always did, employ a much greater Number of Non-freemen, than Freemen ; and that all the former, and great Part of the latter, were formerly employed in the making of Beaver and fine Castor Hats, chiefly for Exportation ; whereas now very few are employed in that Species of the Manufacture, and those only for Home-Consumption.

If, therefore, a Prohibition of the Export of Beaver should not be a means of increasing the Import (as is suggested by the said Paper), it must necessarily be a means of reducing the Price ; and thereby enable the *British* Manufacturers to regain their Export-Trade, now almost wholly engrossed by their most dangerous Rivals : And it is submitted to Consideration, Whether, as the whole Fur-Trade is confined to *Great Britain* and *France* (the latter of which totally prohibits the Exportation of Beaver) it be not for the Interest of this Kingdom, that our own Manufacturers should be furnished with this useful Commodity at a cheaper Rate than Foreigners, as this is the only Market at which they can be supplied ; and, whether it be consistent with the Policy of a Trading Nation, to suffer so valuable a Branch of Commerce to be lost, by encouraging the Exportation of a Material essentially necessary to its Preservation, merely for the Sake of continuing to a few Merchants the Advantages arising from these foreign Commissions ?